

THE EXETER-HALL SERMON TO YOUNG MEN

NO. 1740

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL.

*“O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid:
You have loosed my bonds.”
Psalm 116:16.*

I HAVE been wondering whether I might correctly say that I would preach tonight as a young man to young men. It is precisely what I should like to do, but can I do it? You are young men, I see, to a very large extent, but I wonder whether I am a young man myself. I have two opinions upon it in my mind. Sometimes I feel very old. When I look in the mirror and see the hairs that have turned white upon my head, I suspect that I cannot be a young man. When I feel weary with my work and worn with sickness, I am persuaded that years are telling upon me. Yet, when I recover from sickness, I feel young again, and when cheerful spirits and vivacity return, I half hope, that I may still be a young man. I must not, however, deceive myself, for, when I come to calculate and tally all up, I confess that if youth is essential to membership with the Young Men's Christian Association, I could not expect to be voted in. I am a little under fifty and I am a grandfather, and so I do not think that I can call myself a young man. Very well, I will not take upon myself airs, and pretend to be what I am not, nor will I claim to be quite in your position upon the life-chart. I am not old, however. I suppose that I am just in the middle passage, and as a man in the center of life, I may venture tonight to give some little instruction and advice to you who are at its beginning. I have received a lot of advice myself in former years, and have borne it pretty patiently. Everybody has advised me. I must honestly admit that I have not followed all their advice, or else I had not been here. But now I think that I shall take my turn, and see whether I may not give a little advice. And the advice, such as it is, shall come out of my own experience. I do not expect you to follow it blindly, for I have confessed that I have not always accepted everybody's counsel myself. Only give me a hearing. Gather the good of what I say into vessels and throw the bad away. Before I get quite away from being a young man, I will try to talk with those who so lately were my comrades. Before I shake hands with the old men and ask for a seat among them, I would have a word with those who are coming upon the scene of action to fill our places.

I may honestly say at the very beginning that I want so to preach tonight that every man here who is not yet a servant of the Lord may at least desire to become one, and that very many may actually enlist in the service of our great Lord and Master on this very spot. Why not? I shall be thrice happy, and they will be thrice happy too, if such should be the case. Hence I have taken a text which I can repeat on my own behalf as sincerely as the Psalmist could for himself, “O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid; You have loosed my bonds.”

I. I begin, then, dear young men, by COMMENDING THE SERVICE OF GOD TO YOU. I want you to enter it, and therefore I commend it.

When a young man starts in life, he is apt to inquire of an older person in this fashion—“I should like to get into such-and-such a business, but is it a good one? You have been in it for years, how do you find it?” He seeks the advice of a friend who will tell him all about it. Some will have to warn him that their trade is decaying, and that there is nothing to be done in it. Others will say that their business is very trying, and that if they could get out of it they would. While another will answer for his work, “Well, I have found it all right. I must speak well of the bridge which has carried me over. I have been able to earn a living, and I recommend you try it.” I come here at this time on purpose to give my own experience, and therefore, *I wish to say concerning the service of the Lord, that I have never regretted*

that I entered it. Surely, at some time or other, in these thirty-three years since I put on Christ's livery and became His servant, I would have found out the evil if there had been anything wrong in the religion of Jesus. At some time or other I would have discovered that there was a mistake, and that I was under a delusion. But it has never been so. I have regretted many things which I have done, but I have never regretted that I gave my heart to Christ and became a servant of the Lord. In times of deep depression—and I have had plenty of them—I have feared this and feared the other, but I have never had any suspicion of the goodness of my Master, the truth of His teaching, or the excellence of His service. Neither have I wished to go back to the service of Satan and sin. Mark you; if we had been mindful of the country from where we came out, we have had many an opportunity to return. All sorts of enticements have assailed me, and siren voices have often tried to lure me upon the rocks, but never, never since the day in which I enlisted in Christ's service have I said to myself, "I am sorry that I am a Christian. I am vexed that I serve the Lord." I think that I may, therefore, honestly, heartily and experientially recommend to you the service which I have found so good. I have been a bad enough servant, but never had a servant so lovable a Master or so blessed a service.

There is one thing, too, which will convince you that in my judgment the service of God is most desirable, *I have great delight in seeing my children in the same service.* When a man finds that a business is a bad one, you will not find him bringing up his boys to it. Now, the greatest desire of my heart for my sons was that they might become the servants of God. I never wished for them that they might be great or rich, but, oh, if they would but give their young hearts to Jesus! This I prayed for most heartily. It was one of the happiest nights of my life when I baptized them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, upon profession of their faith. And now, while I am speaking to you, one is preaching in New Zealand and another at Greenwich, and my heart is glad that the gospel which the father preaches, the sons are preaching too. If my Lord's service had been a hard one, I should have said to these lads, "Don't you take to it. God is a hard Master, reaping where He has not sown. I went into the service blindly, but I warn you to avoid it." My conduct has been the reverse of this, and thus I have given you hostages in the persons of my sons for my honest love to my Master and Lord. I do without reserve commend to you the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, for if you enter it, you will wish your sons and daughters to enter it, and it will be your ambition that to the latest generation all your house may fear and serve God.

I would add this more of a personal testimony, so blessed is the service of God that *I would like to die in it!* When I have been unable to preach through physical pain, I have taken my pen to write, and found much joy in making books for Jesus. And when my hand has been unable to wield the pen, I have wanted to talk about my Master to somebody or other, and I have tried to do so. I remember that David Brainerd, when he was very ill and could not preach to the Indians, was found sitting up in bed, teaching a little Indian boy his letters, that he might read the Bible. And so he said, "If I cannot serve God one way, I will another. I will never leave off this blessed service." This is my personal resolve, and verily, there is no merit in it, for my Lord's service is a delight. It is a great pleasure to have anything to do for our great Father and Friend, and most affectionately, for your own good, I commend the service of God to you.

I think of it now in the following lights, and therefore I commend it to you for four reasons.

To serve God is the most reasonable thing in the world. It was He that made you. Should not your Creator have your service? It is He that supports you in being. Should not that being be spent to His glory? Oh, sirs, if you had a cow or a dog, how long would you keep either of them if it were of no service to you? Suppose it were a dog, and it never fawned upon you, but followed at everybody else's heel, and never took notice of *you*—never acknowledged *you* as its master at all? Would you not soon tire of such a creature? Which of you would make an engine or devise any piece of machinery, if you did not hope that it would be of some service to you? Now, God has made you, and a wonderful piece of mechanism is the body and a wondrous thing is the soul, and will you never obey Him with the body or think of Him with the mind? This is Jehovah's own lament, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know. My people do not consider." To have

lived to be 21 without God is a terrible robbery. How have you managed it? To have lived to be 30 or 40 and never to have paid any reverence to Him who has kept the breath in your nostrils, without which you would have been a loathsome carcass in the grave long ago, is a base injustice. How dare you continue in it? To have lived so long, and in addition to that, to have often insulted God, to have spoken against Him, to have profaned His day, to have neglected His Book, to have turned your back on the Son of His love—is not this enough? Will you not cease from such an evil course? Why, there are some men who cannot bear five minutes provocation, no, nor five seconds. It is “a word and a blow” with them, only the blow frequently comes first. But here is God provoked by twenty years at a stretch—the thirty, the forty, the fifty years right on and yet He bears patiently with us. Is it not time that we render to Him our reasonable service? If He has made us, if He has redeemed us, if He has preserved us in being, it is but His due that we should be His servants.

And let me notice, next, that *this is the most honorable service that ever can be*. Did you say, “Lord, I am Your servant”? I see, coming like a flash of light from heaven, a bright spirit, and my imagination realizes his presence. There he stands; a living flame. It is a seraph, fresh from the throne, and what does he say? “O Lord, I am Your servant.” Are you not glad to enter into such company as this? When cherubim and seraphim count it their glory to be the servants of God, what man among us will think it to be a mean office? A prince, an emperor, if he is a sinner against God, is but a dishwasher in the kitchen compared with the true nobleman who serves the Lord in poverty and toil. This is the highest style of service under heaven; no courtier’s honor can rival it. Knights of the Garter or whatever else you like, lose their glories in comparison with the man whom God will call servant in the day of the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You are in grand company, young friend, if you are a servant of God.

And let me note, again, that *this service is full of benefits*. If I had to engage in a trade, I would like to spend my time and strength in a pursuit which did not hurt anybody, and did good to many. Somehow, I do not think that I would like to deal in deadly weapons—certainly not in the accursed drink. I would sooner starve than earn my bread by selling that or anything else that would debase my fellow men, and degrade them below the level of brute beasts. It is a grand thing, I think, if a young man can follow a calling in which he may do well for himself, and be doing well to others at the same time. It is a fine thing to act as some have done who have not grown rich by grinding the faces of poor needle women or by the wage of the servant behind the counter, but have lifted others up with them, and as they have advanced, those in their employment have advanced also. That is a something worth living for in the lower sphere of things. But he that becomes a servant of God is doing good all along, for there is no part of the service of God which can do any harm to anybody. The service of the Lord is all goodness. It is good for yourself, and it is good for your fellow men, for what does God ask in His service but that we should love Him with all our heart, and that we love our neighbor as ourselves? He who does this is truly serving God, by the help of His Spirit, and he is also greatly blessing men. I say, it is a most charitable work to engage in, and therefore it is that I commend it to you—for its reasonableness, its honorableness, and its beneficence.

And there is another thought. *It is the most remunerative work under heaven*. “Not always today,” someone may say. Yet I venture to say, “Always today.” To serve God is remunerative *now*. How so? Certainly not in hard cash, as misers rightly call their gold, but in better material. A quiet conscience is better than gold, and to know that you are doing good is something more sweet in life than to know that you are getting rich or famous. Have not some of us lived long enough to know that the greater part of the things of this world are so much froth upon the top of the cup, far better blown away than preserved? The chief joy of life is to be right with yourself, your neighbor, your God. And he that gets right with God—what more does he need? He is paid for anything that he may suffer in the cause of God by his own peace of mind. There was a martyr once in Switzerland, standing barefoot on the firewood and about to be burnt to death—no pleasant prospect for him. He accosted the magistrate who was superintending his execution, and asked him to come near him. He said, “Will you please lay your hand upon my heart. I am about to die by fire. Lay your hand on my heart. If it beats any faster than it ordinarily beats, do not believe my religion.” The magistrate, with a palpitating heart himself, and all in a tremble, laid his hand upon the martyr’s bosom and found that he was just as calm as if he were going to his bed

rather than to the flames. That is a grand thing! To wear in your buttonhole that little flower called, “heart’s-ease,” and to have the jewel of contentment in your bosom—this is heaven begun below, godliness is great gain to him that has it.

But, listen. I think that all that we can get in this world is paltry, because we must leave it, or it must leave us in a very short time. I am addressing now a congregation of young men. Young men—but in how very short a time, if you all live, will your hair be powdered with the grey of age! In how brief an interval will the whole company now gathered in Exeter Hall be gathered in the grave! How short life is! How swift is time! The older we get, the faster years fly. Only that is worth my having which I can have forever. Only that is worth my grasping which death cannot tear out of my hands. The supreme reward of being a servant of God is hereafter. And if, young man, you should serve God and you should meet with losses here for Christ’s sake, you may count these “light afflictions which are but for a moment,” and think them quite unworthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed, for there is a resurrection of the dead. There is a judgment to come. There is a life eternal. There is a heaven of unutterable splendor. There is a place in that heaven for every one of us who become true servants of the living God.

I think that I hear somebody saying, “Well, I do not want to be a servant.” You cannot help it, my friend, you cannot help it. *You must be a servant of somebody.* “Then I will serve myself,” says one. Pardon me, brave sir, if I whisper in your ear that if you serve yourself you will serve a fool. The man who is the servant of himself—listen to this sentence—the man who is the servant of himself is the slave of a slave, and I cannot imagine a more degrading position for a man to be in than to be the slave of a slave. You will assuredly serve somebody. You will wear fetters, too, if you serve the master that most men choose. Oh, but look at this city—this city full of free men, do the most of them know real liberty? Look at this city full of “freethinkers.” Is there any man that thinks in chains like the man who calls himself a freethinker? Is there any man as credulous as the man that will not believe the Bible? He swallows a ton of difficulties, and yet complains that we have swallowed an ounce of them. He has much more need of faith of a certain sort than we have, for skepticism has far harder problems than faith. And look at the free-liver, what bondage is his life. “Who has woe? Who has redness of eyes” but the slave of strong drink? Who has rottenness in the bones but the slave of his passions? Is there any wretch that ever tugged in the Spanish galley, or any bondsman beneath the sun that is half such a slave as he who will be led tonight by his lusts like a bull to the slaughter, going to his own damnation and even to the ruin of his body, while he makes himself the victim of his own passions? If I must be a slave, I will be a slave to Turks or savage, but never to myself, for that is the nethermost abyss of degradation. You must be a servant to somebody; there is no getting through the world without it. And if you are the servant of yourself, your bondage will be terrible. “Choose this day whom you will serve,” for serve you must. Every man must get to his task, whether he is peer or pauper, millionaire or beggar. Kings and queens are usually the most wearied servants of all. The higher men climb, the more they have to serve their fellow men. You must serve. Oh, that you would enter the service of your God!

There is room in it. Other places are crowded. Hundreds of young men go from shop to shop, and beg for the opportunity to earn a livelihood. I lament that in many instances they beg in vain. Some of you wear the boots off your feet in trying to get something to do. How anxiously do I desire that you may find the employment you seek! But there is room in the service of God, and He is willing to receive you. And let me tell you that, if you enter His service, *it will help you in everything that you have to do in this life.* They say that a Christian man is a fool. Ah, proud opposers, though we say not the same to you, we might, perhaps, with truth think so. I have seen many believers in Jesus whom it would have been very dangerous to deal with as with fools, for very soon he that dealt with them in that fashion would have found that he made a great mistake. They are not always fools who are called so; they are such sometimes who use those names. I like a Christian man to be all the better in every respect for being a Christian. He should be a better servant and a better master. He should be a better tradesman and a better artisan. Surely, there is no poet whose minstrelsy excels that of the poet of the sanctuary. Milton still sits alone. There is no painter that should paint so well as he who tries with his brush to make immortal the memorable scenes in which great deeds were done. That which you can now do well you might do better by becoming a servant of God.

Thus I would commend my Master's service with all my heart. Are there any here who will enlist in it? For if so, I have a second point to dwell on very briefly. I lift the flag and bid you rally to it, but first hear me patiently.

II. My second point is A WORD OF CAUTION. Did you notice that David said, "O Lord, *truly* I am Your servant." "Truly." The word of caution is, if you become the servant of God, become the servant of God *truly*. God is not mocked. It is the curse of our churches that we have so many merely nominal Christians in them. It is the plague of this age that so many put on Christ's livery, and yet never do Him a hand's turn. Oh, if you serve God, mean it! If a man serves the devil, let him serve the devil, but if he serves God, let him serve God. Some people serve their business very actively, but not their God. There was, years ago, a brother who used to occasionally pray at the prayer meeting in a low tone, as if he had no lungs left. Seldom could you hear what he said, and if you listened and strained your ears there was still nothing to hear. I thought that the brother had a bad voice, and so I never called on him to pray any more. But, stepping one day into his shop, I heard him say in a commanding voice, "John, fetch that half-hundred!" "Oh, dear!" I thought, "That is the kind of voice he has in his business, but when he comes into the service of God, that little squeak is all he can give." Laugh again, sirs! Laugh again! It deserves to be laughed at. But is there not much of this hypocrisy abroad? God is to have the cheese-parings of a man's life, and he flings these down as if they were all that God was worth? But as for the world, that is to have the vigor of his life and the cream of his being. God does not want nominal servants, nor do I invite them in His name tonight. "O Lord, truly I am Your servant," said David. And he that does not mean to *truly* be God's servant let him not pretend to be one at all.

If you would be God's servant, then *count the cost*. You must leave all others. "You cannot serve God and mammon." You cannot serve Christ and Belial. He is not God's who is not God's only.

You must enter upon God's service also, *for life*, not to be sometimes God's servant and sometimes not—off and on. Have you ever heard of the child who was asked by the district visitor, "Is your father a Christian?" The child replied, "Yes, sir, father is a Christian, but he is not doing much at it, just now." Oh, how many Christians there are of that sort! They profess to be Christians, but they are not doing much at it. If you become the servant of God, you must be His servant every day and all day forever and ever—

*"'Tis done, the great transaction's done:
I am my Lord's, and He is mine,"*

must be a covenant declaration which must stand true throughout your entire life. And if you become the servant of God, *you must cease from every known sin*. You cannot give one hand to Christ and another to Satan. You must give up your dearest sins. Sweet sin must become bitter. If sins are like right hands or right eyes, they must be cut off or plucked out, and you must follow Christ fully, giving Him all your heart, and soul, and strength. For if it is not so, you cannot be His disciple.

So much by way of caution, and I was very brief on that, but take it as though it were said at length.

III. I want, now, to OFFER COUNSEL IN THE MATTER OF DISTINCT CONFESSION IF YOU BECOME THE SERVANT OF CHRIST. "I am Your servant," says David, and then he says it over again, "*I am Your servant.*"

Now, I want every young man here who is a Christian to make it known by an open avowal of his discipleship. I mean that there should not be one among us who follows the Lord Jesus Christ in a mean, sneaking, indistinct, questionable way. It has become the custom of many to try to be Christians and never say anything about it. This is beneath contempt. But I urge you true servants of Christ to "out with it," and never be ashamed, because if ever a bold profession was required, it is required now. You may not be burned at the stake for saying that you are a Christian, but I believe that the old enmity to Christ is not removed, and a true believer will still be called upon to take up his cross. In many a house in London a young man will have to run the gauntlet if he is known to be a Christian. Run the gauntlet, then! You have an honorable opportunity. It is a grand thing to be permitted to endure reproach for Christ's sake, and you should look at it as a choice privilege that you are counted worthy, not only to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but also to suffer for His sake. Nowadays the world needs decided men. Everywhere it seems to be imagined that you may believe what you like, or believe nothing, and do as you

like, or do nothing, and the result will be all the same both to the unbeliever and the man of faith. But it is not so. It is time for the out-and-out servant of the Lord to put down his foot and say, "I have believed, therefore have I spoken. I am a Christian, and while I leave you to your individual liberty, I mean to have mine, and I mean to exercise that liberty by being openly and unquestionably on the side of Christ, and on the side of that which is pure, and sober, and right, and true and good."

Is not this well deserved by Christ? Oh, if He never was ashamed of us, we ought never to be ashamed of Him! If the Lord of life and glory stooped to die for us, could we ever stoop at all, even if we rolled into the mire or dropped into the grave for Him? Surely, our blessed Lord deserves to be followed by heroes. Every man in the presence of the cross-bearing Jesus should feel that to take up his cross and follow Christ is the simplest and most natural thing that can be, and he should resolve, in God's strength, that he will do it, and continue to obey the Lord, though all the world should ridicule. Let me tell you that *it is the easiest thing* to do, after all. As compared with compromise, it is simplicity itself. I have known many young Christians who have come up to London, and they have determined that they would serve God if they could, but that they would keep it very quiet, and so they have attempted to be Christians on the sly, but they have failed. If you are a genuine Christian, it will be found out as surely as you are a living man. If you go down to Mitcham when the lavender is ripe, you may shut all your windows, but you will find that the perfume of the lavender will get into your house somehow. Christianity has a perfume about it which will spread abroad so that all in the house inquire, "What is all this?" The wicked wags will whisper that you are "a Christian young man," and if you have not come out at the first, it will be very hard for you afterwards. Begin as you mean to go on, young man. Do not hide your flag and try to sail under false colors, for both good and bad will be against you in that case. You will be hunted from place to place if the dogs find that you will run, you will make rare sport for the hunters if you take to your heels. Come straight out and let them do their best or their worst. Live a most consistent life and the other young fellows will know where you are. They will soon reckon you up, and if you are sincere, before long they will leave you alone, and if they do not, forbearance is still yours. If they continue to persecute you, so much the worse *for them*, for you, by your quiet, holy life, will make them feel that it is hard for them to kick against the pricks. But, anyhow, do come out bravely. Some of you young fellows are like rats behind the wainscot, you do not mind coming out at night to eat the crumbs on the floor, but there you are, back again directly. I mean that you will join in religious exercises if it is not known to the shop, but you would not for the world become suspected of real religion. Is that how true Christians should act? No, put on your uniform. "But I do not care about joining a church," says one. Very likely, but do you not know that it is found to be a convenient and proper thing in warfare that a soldier should wear a uniform? At first, Oliver Cromwell's Ironsides were dressed anyway and every way, but in the *melee* with the Cavaliers it sometimes happened that an Ironsides was struck down by mistake by the sword of one of his own brethren, and so the general said, "You wear red coats, all of you. We must know our own men from the enemy." What Cromwell said he meant, and they had to come in their red coats, for it is found essential in warfare that men should be known by some kind of uniform. Now, you that are Christ's do not go about as if you were ashamed of His Majesty's service. Put on your red coats, I mean come out as acknowledged Christians. Unite with a body of Christian people and be distinctly known to be Christ's. How are the ordinances of the Lord's house to be sustained if every man is to go to heaven alone by the back way? Come out boldly. If any man wants to laugh at a Christian, step out and say, "Laugh at me. If anybody wants to abuse a fellow, and call him a hypocrite, a Presbyterian, a Methodist, come on! I am ready for you." If you have once done that and come right out on the straight, you shall find it the easiest thing in life to bear the reproach of Christ.

And oh, remember, young men, that if you should meet with any reproach for Christ, *a reward awaits you*. Shall I tell you a parable? There was once a king's son who went upon a journey incognito, and he journeyed into a far country. But there he was ill-treated, and because of his language and his appearance, the people of the land set him in the stocks, which was of old the place of scorn. They set him there, and the mob gathered round him, and threw all kinds of filth and dung upon him. This unknown prince was thus pelted, and made as the offscouring of all things. But there was among them one man who loved the prince, and who recognized him, and he determined to bear him company. He mounted

the stocks and stood by his side, and wiped his face with his handkerchief, and whenever he could, he put himself in the way of the mire and dirt, that he might catch it and screen the prince from it. Years went on and it came to pass that the prince was back in his kingdom in all his glory, and the courtiers were standing round about the throne. This man who had been a poor man in his own country was summoned to the court, and when he arrived at the palace, the prince saw him and said to the peers of the realm, "Stand aside and make way for this man. He was with me when I was ill-treated and scorned, and now he shall be with me in my glory, chief among you here." Do you not know the story of how our sweet Lord Jesus came down to earth and suffered many things, and how He was despised and rejected of men? Young man, are you the man who would wipe His blessed face, and share His shame, and take half turns with the man of Nazareth in all His disgrace and scorn? Are you that man? Then there shall come a day when the great Father, on His throne, shall spy you out and say, "Make a lane, you angels! Stand back, seraphim and cherubim! Make way for this man. He was with My Son in His humiliation, and now he shall be with Him in His glory." Will you receive that mark of honor? Not unless you are prepared to put on the badge of Christ, and say, "I am His servant and His follower from this day to life's end." God help you to do it! O Holy Spirit, lead scores of young men to shoulder the Cross!

IV. And so, lest I weary you, I CLOSE BY CONGRATULATING SOME OF YOU, who are God's servants, UPON YOUR FREEDOM, for that is the last part of the text. "Truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid; *You have loosed my bonds.*"

Oh, but this is a grand thing—this loosing of the bonds. Were you ever in bonds? Did you ever feel *the bonds of guilt*? Are you, believing in Christ; then those bonds are loosed, for your sin is forgiven you for Christ's sake, and you are delivered from all condemnation. Oh, will you not love Him who has loosed your bonds? Were you, dear friend, ever *in the bonds of despondency* and despair on account of sin? Did you ever sit and sigh because you thought that there was no salvation for you? And did the Lord Jesus Christ appear to you as your crucified Savior? And did you trust in Him and feel the bond of despondency broken? Happy day for you! I remember it well, myself. Oh, then, will you not follow Him that has loosed your bonds? Now, you are clean delivered from the bonds of guilt and despair. You are also saved from *the power of sin*. The habits that were your masters are now destroyed. The lusts that lorded over you are now slain and you are free. Will you not wish to be bound to Christ from now on because He has loosed your bonds? I know some men in this world who talk a great deal about being free, but they are always in chains. There is a man I know for whom the devil makes a nauseous mixture, at least to me it is very nauseous, and he says, "Drink a quart of it," and he drinks. "Drink another," says the devil, and he does so. "Drink another," says the devil, and his brain begins to reel, and he is all on fire. "Drink it," says the devil, and he lets it run down his throat, for he is in chains. I know another who, against his better self, will go into sin, which he knows to be sin, and knows to be injurious to him. Yet he goes in a silly manner and harms himself more and more. He is led by the nose by the devil, and he says that he cannot resist. He is a slave in the worst sense. Oh, blessed is the man who can say, "You have loosed my bonds: no evil habit now enslaves me. No passion controls me, no lust enchains me!" Young friend, if you can stand up and say, "I am free from myself, I am no longer the slave of sin!"—you are a blessed man, and you may well be God's servant forever!

What a mercy it is to be delivered from *the bonds of the fear of man*! Some young men dare not call their souls their own for fear of their employers. A great many more are dreadfully in fear of the young man who sleeps in the next bed. Oh, dear, they dare not do what is right! Poor babies that they are, they must ask permission to keep a conscience! When they are about to do anything, they are always saying, "What will So-and-so think of it?" Does it matter to any true man what the entire world thinks about him? Has he not risen out of that? Is he still a serf? "Go," says the brave man, "think what you will, and say what you will. If I serve God, I am no servant of yours. By your censures I shall not fall, as by your praises I shall not rise." Be afraid of such a thing as I myself, and ask the leave of another man what I shall think, what I shall believe, what I shall do! I will die first! When God brings a man to know Him, and to be His servant, He sets him free from this cowardly crime of being afraid of a man that shall die.

So, too, He sets him free from all *the maxims and customs of the world*. Young man, when you go into business, they will tell you that you must do such-and-such because it is "the custom of the trade."

“Why,” you say, “it is lying!” You will be told that it is not exactly lying, because your customer is used to your tricks, and quite understands that a hundred means eighty, and the best quality means a second-class article. I am told that half the business in London is robbery in some form or another if the customs of the trade are not understood. If it is so that it is all understood, it might just as well be done honestly for the matter of that, and it would pay as well. Yet, somehow, men feel as if they must do what others have done, or else they will be out of the race. Slaves! Serfs! Be honest! He is not free that dares not be honest. Shall I not speak my mind? Shall I not act out my integrity? If I cannot, then I cannot say with David, “You have loosed my bonds.”

Lastly, what a blessing it is when God frees us from *the fear of death*! “You have loosed my bonds.” What will it matter to you, young man, if you become the servant of God by faith in Jesus Christ, whether you live or die, if you die early, so much the sooner in heaven, if you live long, so much the longer in which to serve your God on earth. Give your heart to Christ, trust your salvation in those dear hands that were pierced for sinners, thus become the servant of God, and you shall be provided for, for His children shall not lack. You shall be led, guided, taught, educated, and prepared for heaven. And one of these bright days a convoy of celestial spirits shall think it an honor to be permitted to bear your joyful spirit up to the throne of God.

Who will be the servant of the Most High, then? I always wish, when I have done with sermons that I could preach them over again, because I have not done well enough. But all I care to preach for is that I may touch your hearts. I would not care a snap of the fingers to be an orator, or to speak pretty sentences. I want to put forward the truth so that some young man will say, “I will serve God.” I remember young men that began life when I began, that are now—I will not say what. Ah! I remember hearing their names mentioned as models, they were such fine young men, and had just gone up to London. Yes, and they are tonight, if not in jail, in the workhouse. It all came about in this way: the young man sent word home to his mother what the text was on Sunday, yet he had not been to hear a sermon at all. He had been to some amusement to spend a happy day. Wherever he went he had neglected the house of God, and by-and-by there was a little wrong in his small accounts—just a little matter. But that man could not pick himself up again, having once lost his character. There was another. There was nothing wrong in his accounts, but his habits were loose. By-and-by he was ill. Who could wonder? When a man plays with edged tools, he is very likely to cut himself. It was not long before he was so sickly that he could not attend to business, and before long, he died. And they said—I fear it was true—that he killed himself by vice. And that is how thousands do in London. Oh, if you become the servant of God, this will not happen to you! You may not be rich; you may not be famous; you may not be great; you need not desire these things. They are full often gilded vanities. But to be a man—to the fullness of your manhood, to be free and dare to look every other man in the world in the face, and speak the truth, and do the right, to be a man that can look God in the face because Christ has covered him with His glorious righteousness—this is the ambition with which I would fire the spirit of every young man before me. And I pray God that the flame may burn in his life by the power of the divine Spirit. Come then, Brethren, bow your heads and say, “We will be servants of the living God henceforth and forever.” God grant it, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 116.

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